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RECONSTRUCTION DAYS.

I.

THE July number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW contained a series of important letters bearing on reconstruction days. This series is continued here. Some of these letters recall the questions born with the closing days of the war. Some of them relate to questions a little later than the war days; but all are of interest in the sense of what somebody has called the "Broken Lights of the Foreground."

The burning questions of ante-bellum days were forever settled. The origin of them all was dead. The surrender of the South brought new questions—new experiences. Some of the war-leaders had laid down the sword only to mount the rostrum, and, with the assassination of Lincoln, the new war of ideas and words commenced. Was the South *in* the Union, or was the South *out* of the Union? Should the black man be enfranchised, or should he *not* be enfranchised?

The two problems formed the basis of all other political problems of the day.

Possibly the very first to openly declare an opinion as to negro enfranchisement was Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury. He not only expressed his opinions—he urged his principles on the Administration. The fact lends a double interest to those of his letters here printed, though fragmentary, and, in a sense, private.

Of scarcely less interest are the added letters of Generals Sherman, Grant, Ord, and others, bearing, as they do, on questions that were "burning" fifteen to twenty years ago, and the outgrowth of a conflict that, in the words of President Lincoln, "no mortal could make and no mortal could stay."

S. H. M. BYERS.

II.

The note below, from General Halleck to General Sherman at

Vicksburg, shows the confidence felt in Washington at that time in the judgment of men who had been successful at arms, and who might have opinions worth knowing on civil affairs.

Private.

WASHINGTON, August 27, 1863.

MAJOR-GEN. W. T. SHERMAN, Vicksburg, Miss.

MY DEAR GENERAL: The question of reconstruction in Louisiana, Miss., and Ark. will soon come up for the decision of the Government, and not only the length of the war, but our ultimate and complete success, will depend upon its decision. It is a difficult matter, but I believe it can be successfully solved, if the President will consult the opinions of cool and discreet men who are capable of looking at it in all its bearings and effects. I think he is disposed to receive the advice of our Generals who have been in these States, and know much more of their condition than gassy politicians in Congress. Gen'l Banks has written pretty fully on the subject. I wrote to Gen'l Grant immediately after the fall of Vicksburg for his views in regard to Miss., but he has not yet answered. I wish you would consult with Grant, McPherson, and others of cool, good judgment, and write me your views fully. As I may wish to use them with the President, you had better write me unofficially, and then your letter will not be put on file, and cannot hereafter be used against you. You have been in Washington enough to know how everything a man writes or says is picked up by his enemies and misconstrued. With kind wishes for your future success, I am yours truly,

H. W. HALLECK.

III.

What President Johnson's and Mr. Chase's views were, as to the recognition of official bodies chosen in the South previous to the ending of the war, may be seen by the following letter from Mr. Chase himself. This was just after the death of Mr. Lincoln. It would seem that Mr. Johnson was then more willing to have the military attempt something in a civil way for the restoration of the South than had been the case in the Johnston-Sherman treaty, though Mr. Chase also disapproved the latter. Mr. Lincoln had assured General Sherman, but a few weeks before, that the rebel State governments in existence at the time of their laying down their arms should have temporary recognition.

Mr. Johnson had other views. Admiral Porter has put on record that the terms offered Johnston by General Sherman were, as a matter of fact, President Lincoln's terms. Only his death prevented their approval. President Johnson's retreat from his own policy, and his later denunciation of negro-enfranchisement as an "untried experiment," were the first rocks in the way to reconstruction.

U. S. REV. STEAMER, WAYONDA,

May 5, 1865.

MY DEAR GENERAL : You were kind enough to show me Schofield's telegram. That you may see what my views are, I enclose printed copies of two letters of mine to President Lincoln, written on Tuesday and Wednesday preceding the great crime. They have been printed—a few copies only—for convenience, *not* for publication.

I have some reason to think that the views they express will ultimately be adopted. Indeed, it seems to me certain that the logic of events will coerce their adoption.

President Johnson is clearly of opinion that no official body or individual, owing election or appointment to rebel votes or authorities, can be recognized by the National Government, but that reorganization should proceed from the people. He would be gratified to have *all loyal* citizens participate in this work without reference to complexion, believing that by general suffrage the best, safest, and most permanent reorganization would be secured. I have ventured to represent to him the importance of settling some policy—adopting this, if possible—and taking the initiative by proclaiming and recommending it. The matter was under consideration when I left Washington. I am sure that judicious steps taken in this direction by General Schofield, or any other general commanding in a State whose government is disorganized by rebellion, would not be disapproved.

I was glad to have your explanations concerning the arrangement with Johnston. I shared the regret it was made, and disapproved of its terms, which your best friends felt ; but neither my confidence in you, nor my gratitude for your services, ever knew the slightest diminution, and I am now as I have ever been since knowing you, with the sincerest admiration and esteem, your friend.

S. P. CHASE.

Major-General W. T. SHERMAN.

IV.

General Sherman's "harshness toward the blacks," referred to by Mr. Chase in the following letter, was more apparent than real. The charge that he looked upon them as a "sort of pariahs almost without rights," will sound amusing to many who knew Sherman's real sentiments. Sherman's mind was taken up, first of all, with putting down the rebellion. That done, he was as ready to protect the colored man as any officer in the country, regardless as to his own sentiments as to the propriety of this or that. On the occasion referred to, when he wished his camp to be cleared of "surplus negroes and mules," he only wished for room. There were too many wagons, too many mules, too many negroes, too many sick soldiers about the camp. They were in his way, and in his request to have them removed, he bluntly put

them together in a phrase, and without a thought of offense or of classing the negroes with the cattle. His later actions proved this.

WASHINGTON, *January 2, 1865.*

DEAR GENERAL: In common with all loyal men, I partake the gratitude and admiration inspired by the services of your army and yourself. My hopes of you at the beginning were great. They have been more than realized; and I trust that the country's debt to you is yet to be largely augmented.

But there is one feature of your military administration which gives pain to many, and I think I perform the part of a true friend, and infringe no rule of propriety, in mentioning it to you.

I refer to the apparent harshness of your action towards the blacks. You are understood to be opposed to their employment as soldiers, and to regard them as a sort of pariahs almost without rights. In your first report after opening communication with General Foster, you spoke of the necessity of ridding your camp of the surplus negroes, mules, etc. I do not remember the exact words, but I do remember the report. I felt that an expression classing men with cattle found place in a paper which cannot fail to be historical.

In my judgment, negroes as men have the same rights as other men. The President has, by proclamation and as a military measure, enfranchised those who were held as slaves in the Rebel States. The Attorney-General, in a well-considered opinion, has asserted the citizenship of those who are free. And it seems to me not doubtful, that in the political reorganization of the States in insurrection, political as well as natural rights must be conceded to a portion, at least, of the colored population. For myself, indeed, I freely say that I see no reason why all citizens may not vote, subject only to such restrictions as are applicable to all, irrespective of color. I feel sure that the justice and good sense of the people will, at least, demand the right of suffrage for all who are educated, and all who have borne arms in the service of the Union. Without this, at least, I see no security against attempted re-enslavement, against the most inhuman and cruel discrimination and treatment of the colored people as a class, or indeed, against the ascendancy of the disloyal element in the insurgent States, as soon as the military pressure shall be removed.

Doubtless you have thought much on these subjects. But may I not ask you to take them again into your consideration? May I not ask you especially to avoid any appearance of harshness or severity which does not represent or express your real sentiments and convictions? You have a great and most responsible position. Your example, for good or evil, will be followed by officers of lower character and less discretion. Your action will influence largely the destinies of multitudes. It is my anxious wish that it may command for you the lasting gratitude of all good men, and the approval of Him who is no "respector of persons."

With the sincerest respect and esteem, yours very truly,

Maj.-Gen. W. T. SHERMAN.

S. P. CHASE.

V.

This letter from Mr. Chase to General Sherman not only shows the high regard in which the latter was held by him, but his conscientious wish to smooth matters over after the outrageous action of both Halleck and Stanton toward Sherman, who had been branded almost as a traitor at the very moment he was receiving the nation's applause. Time and investigation, though, have pretty fully convinced the public that the action of Stanton and Halleck was not so much the result of enmity, jealousy, or malice as it was the consequence of a temporary stampede of political sense, following the assassination of the President. The second note below, from Mr. Chase, too, still bears on the enfranchisement of the negro.

[MOREHEAD CITY, N. C.]
U. S. REV. STEAMER WAYONDA,

May 6, 1865.

DEAR GENERAL : I have always been thought a radical in principle, and never have disclaimed the name ; but I have tried to be conservative in working, and have generally got along without breaking things. This morning, I met at Beaufort, Col. Taylor, a gentleman of ability, a holder of a hundred and twenty-five slaves before the war, and a handsome estate in lands. He has come to the conclusion that it is best to restore the *old* constitution of North Carolina, under which *all freemen* voted, and believes that the Union and Union men will be safest with *universal suffrage*. I met others with different opinions, but none manifested any such feeling as would lead me to expect any renewal of trouble from the extension of the elective franchise to *all loyal citizens*, and inviting all to participate in the work of reorganization.

The matter must be left to consideration and reflection. It is a clear duty to be frank and open ; and this duty requires the National Government to say distinctly what, in its dictionary, the words "loyal people" mean. The most obvious signification should, in my judgment, be adopted. All *loyal men* must be taken as the synonymous expression. John Sherman has maintained this view, I am told, since the adjournment of Congress, in a speech in Ohio. But I will trouble you no further with these ideas. Time will try all opinions. Our ends are the same, permanent Union and permanent peace.

Let me, however, most respectfully, but very earnestly, advise against the publication of the general order you have sent me. I cannot see that any good will come of it; but I fear some evil.

My knowledge of the internal administration of the War Department for nearly a year past has been only that which all may gather from the journals, and, of course, I am not well enough informed to judge of the motives of recent action. I cannot believe, however, that it had its origin in any bad feeling towards you ; so far as Randal, Johnson, or Secretary Stanton are concerned. Since my conversation with you, I have seen more clearly the motives and

views which governed you. I presume they do also, and will soon become more fully informed and more definitely impressed. I know what your feelings must be, but you are not required to do anything to ensure full justice to your acts and intentions both from the Government and the people.

I hope you will let time and reason do the work of your vindication, and put the order, at least, in abeyance.

Pardon this expression of opinion on a matter of which you are so much the better judge. Your kindness in permitting me to see the order seems to warrant it.

You are a native of Ohio, a State which adopted me and has dealt most generously with me. Your honor and fame are therefore especially dear to me. Besides this, your brother was my ablest and firmest supporter in my difficult financial administration, and my gratitude to him extends itself in some sort to you. So you must excuse my solicitude, not forgetting that it is that of one a good deal older than you are, who has had a large experience, though less varied perhaps than your own.

Very truly your friend,

Maj.-Gen. W. T. SHERMAN.

S. P. CHASE.

VI.

U. S. REV. STEAMER WAYONDA,
[MOREHEAD CITY, N. C.,]

May 5, 1865.

MY DEAR GENERAL: Thanks for your note: it is frank and to the point, and what you say shall be carefully pondered. All my opinions have been formed in the light of practical experience, and are subject to all the modifications and corrections it suggests.

You know that I have been long concerned in public affairs, and have had large interests to control and serve, both in Ohio and Washington. The lesson that is strongly impressed on my mind is that boldness and decision, guided by common sense and strict regard to rights, oftenest prove sure guides to safe results; and now my trouble in attempting reorganization without the loyal blacks, proved quite as much from the apprehension that it will work more practical evil than it will avoid, as from any abstract theory.

But you have my views and I have yours. Let us both reflect and observe. I will try to dismiss from my mind all mere preconceptions, and have no doubt you will do the same, and may God guide our country right.

Thinking it may be of some interest to you, and finding one among my papers, I send you a copy of the order to Gen'l Shepley. As I have only one, please return it. Yours most truly,

Maj.-Gen'l W. T. SHERMAN.

S. P. CHASE.